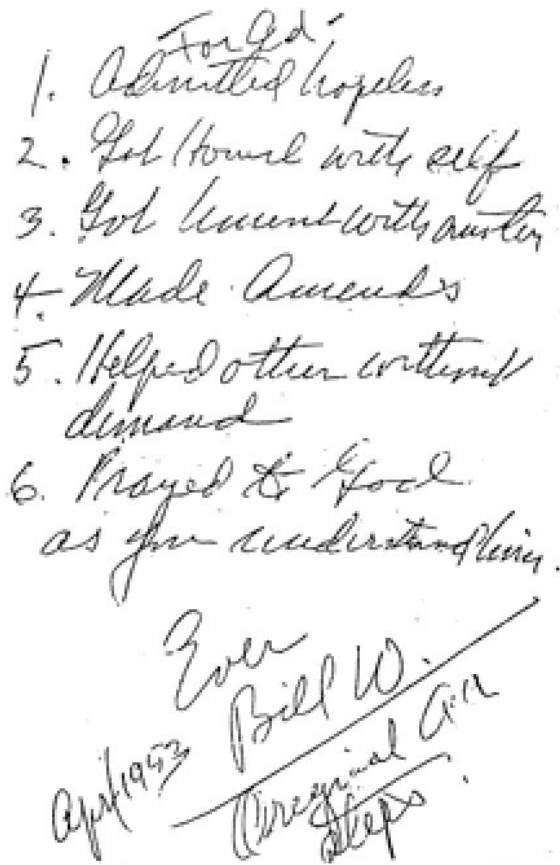


Step 4 - from the booklet "Simple Directions"¹

Fearless and Moral Inventory

The AA Steps owe a great deal of their structure to the six steps of the original Oxford Group, a Christian fellowship dedicated to the ideal fellowship of the First Century church.

When asked about The Oxford Group's "Steps", Bill W. broke them into six and wrote the following scrap to explain their process:

- 
1. Admitted helplessness
 2. Got honest with self
 3. Got honest with another
 4. Made Amends
 5. Helped other with their demand
 6. Prayed to God as you understand Him.
- Ever
Bill W.
Apr 1953
Original AA Steps

Our Steps 4 through 9 are a clarification of the Oxford Group's simple Step Four "Make Amends". The expansion was intended to break down the process to allow an alcoholic to do each part of the process and do it as thoroughly as possible.

If you have made it to Step Three, your sponsor and your meetings will confirm that the next Step is to be taken immediately. In the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, the direction begins in Chapter Five, at the bottom of page 63.

"Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted."

It is the intent of this guide to help make a searching and moral inventory as guided by the book.

Steps One, Two, and Three did not create the problem — they are the statements of truth regarding your disease and your situation. They are the beginning of the leveling of pride and ego, which we are told will become a lifelong process. In each of these steps you begin the difficult process of telling the truth.

You did not become an alcoholic because you admitted to Step One. You simply admitted what was already true.

You did not create a Higher Power through Step Two; you simply admitted to the truth that you are

¹ "Simple Directions" is available as a free download from directions.anonymousreview.org, and may also be purchased as a separate booklet through the link on that web page.

not God or the Higher Power of your personal understanding.

In Step Th ree you do not achieve anything beyond taking that deep breath to begin The Work of recovery.

“The Work” is often referenced in AA meetings, but sometimes people can go for years without knowing what “The Work” is. For simplicity, let us take a moment to define “The Work” for your own progress.

The Big Book is clearly divided between the basic text of the front (Cover through Page 164, or Page 181 to include Dr. Bob’s Nightmare, depending on who you are talking to) and the stories in the back.

But upon closer examination we find a second structure in the book. The area from the Cover through Page 52 is a summary for Step One — defining alcoholism and the alcoholic, with an introduction to the spiritual nature of our disease.

On Page 52 (although discussion of the meat of Step Two has already begun), there is a paragraph that gives the summation of “our lives had become unmanageable.” It is sometimes called The Bedevilments*.

The previous pages discuss the changes seen in the 1930s as the result of technological progress. The authors and early members of our fellowship all came from a time when “man will never fly” had been changed to include regularly scheduled flights to China from San Francisco. They had seen horses and carriages give way to automobiles. They had seen communications move from newspapers and telegraphy to newsreels, movies, radio, and telephones.

The paragraph on Page 52 says:

“We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn’t apply to our human problems this same readiness to change the point of view. We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn’t control our emotional natures, we were a prey

to misery and depression, we couldn’t make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn’t seem to be of real help to other people - was not a basic solution of these bedevilments more important than whether we should see newsreels of lunar flight? Of course it was.”*

Big Book, Ppage 52

At each of the statements it is best to pause, to ask if that part of the paragraph applies to you.

- . Were you having trouble with personal relationships?
- . Were you able to control your emotions?
- . Were you prey to misery and depression?
- . Could you make a living?
- . Were you full of fear?
- . Were you unhappy?
- . Were you able to be of real help to other people?
- . Do you see that your solution of these bedevilments is more important than other pursuits?

The Bedevilments on Page 52 are the end of Step One and the opening to the work of Step Two.

On page 88 you are at the end of Step Eleven.

Page 89, the chapter “Working with Others” is the beginning of Step Twelve, which continues through the rest of the book, including the stories in the back. Those stories are people sharing their Experience, Strength, and Hope with you as their Twelve Step call on you.

The 36 pages from page 52 to page 88 contain Steps Two through Step Eleven. These pages, these Steps, are “The Work.”

Do the Work and you get the result!

You are the only one who can say if you are willing to move forward, but as with the rest of

your work in the Twelve Steps, it is best to have an advisor, a “native guide” for the new territory – a Sponsor.

Understand that many of the men and women with double-digit sobriety report that they have not seen anyone start a Fourth Step and hesitate before beginning their amends in Step Nine and stay sober!

The process requires completion. Alcoholics are great beginners, but not so good on finishing what they start. If you make the commitment, then take the action and the results will follow. Finish this process!

You will never feel finished. The book tells us this is “the beginning of a lifelong process,” but it also tells us that this way of life is “a design for living that really works.”

It is suggested that you follow the direction of your sponsor. If you are not using a sponsor, it is important that you have someone who can guide you - — do not attempt this process on your own. You can never see your eye with that same eye. You must use a mirror, and your sponsor is your mirror.

. The pressure built by performing the Inventory can only be reduced through the thorough examination and organization of what comes out of it. Your sponsor will help you organize and prioritize the results — what is revelation, what is ego, what is fear, what is pride, and what is an asset.

. Through the Fifth Step you will come to see yourself, possibly for the first time.

In the Sixth Step you will realize what parts of you are either defective, or which are lacking, and become willing to have those defects and shortcomings removed.

In the Seventh Step you will take the same deep breath you took in Step Th ree to turn everything over to the Higher Power which you have come to believe. You will not tell that Higher Power what is to be removed or to be kept — you simply ask to have everything that stands in the way of your service to others removed.

In Step Eight you will return to this inventory (most people add to the list begun in Step Four) to determine how you and your disease have damaged the people, institutions, and relationships around you. You will find that (if you are to stay sober) you are willing to do whatever is required to make those damages heal, or at least make it better.

In Step Nine you will step back into the world to heal the damage of your past and establish a new foundation for life without the weight and the guilt, the shame, the fear, and the selfishness of your past.

But none of this can begin without the thorough housecleaning required on Page 63 and 64 of the Big Book.

Prepare yourself for this process. Discuss your fears with your Sponsor. Gather your materials and begin.

Are You Ready To Take The 3rd Step Prayer?

“God I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always!”²

Remember, the next paragraph on Page 63 says “The wording, of course, is quite optional.” It is important that you mean what you pray. If you

² See “The Full Prayer” for an expansion of this suggested prayer, but remember the following paragraph tells us that the wording is optional and as is your way of saying a prayer.

can take the words as presented and come to mean them, the prayer as written can work for you.

If, however, you find it hard to relate to the words as written, if you do not use “Thee” and “Thine” as part of your normal language, you can take the prayer and restate it in your own words so that you can say a heartfelt prayer of surrender and willingness to proceed with your Recovery.

An Important Note

The Big Book says at the end of Step 3 (emphasis added):

“NEXT we launch out on a course of VIGOROUS action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision (Step 3) was a vital and crucial step (so it’s important), it could have LITTLE PERMANENT EFFECT (it doesn’t amount to much) unless AT ONCE (immediately or now) followed by a STRENUOUS EFFORT to face (where we face these things is in Steps 4 - 6), AND to be rid of (where we get rid of these things is in Steps 7 - 9), the things in ourselves which had been blocking us (we can’t turn our will and our lives over to the care of God until we get unblocked from doing so by immediately and quickly working Steps Four through Nine). Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.

Preparation

Before he died, Dr. Bob told Bill “Keep it Simple.” You can follow that in your Inventory.

The first thing you need to do is talk with your sponsor. Does your sponsor agree that you are ready to take this next step? Go through this booklet with your sponsor to be sure that he, or she, agrees with the process it presents. Your sponsor may have used a different system and if anything is found in these pages that are in conflict with your sponsor, go with the direction your sponsor gives you. Your sponsor knows you better than the authors of this booklet!

Get a notebook to dedicate to your Inventory. It can be a simple spiral bound notebook, a composition book or other empty volume. You can usually find good ones in dollar stores, or you might have one left over from a previous “good intention” attempt at the Steps which is still blank and usable.

Get two or three reliable pens or pencils with you. The excuses “my pen stopped working” or “my pencil broke” will not be available.

Have your own copy of the Big Book and, if your sponsor agrees, a copy of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

Your sponsor may suggest a certain number of sessions per week — 20-60 minutes committed in advance. Your schedule may only allow one session per week or even time every day — make this decision with your sponsor.

Try to find a place where you can concentrate on the work at hand. It should be quiet — free of distractions but you will hear of people who worked at their inventories while the kids made noise elsewhere in the house, or sitting in their car at a lake or wooded spot, or sitting in a coffee shop, or a public library, or even a special “writing” meeting occasionally offered by individual AA groups. You will find you can complete your Inventory if your commitment is to finish and is not dependent on some condition you set before you begin.

When you sit down to write, be comfortable and take a few moments to be quiet. Pray and meditate as you feel is appropriate — you may be able to find the quiet you need in a few moments, or you may need ten or twenty minutes of prayer and meditation to begin.

Don’t try to decide in advance what you should or should not write down. If you think of it, write it down.

If you are writing an inventory after a relapse, talk to your sponsor. Most sponsors tell a

returning member of AA not to depend on the previous inventory (or inventories). The issues raised on those previous inventories were not handled by someone who stayed sober.

Remember, we can write too little for our Inventory, but we can never write too much.

What Your Inventory is NOT

Your Inventory is not a long narrative to explain everything. Your sponsor may (or may not) approve of you writing such a narrative as part of your recovery, but that is not your Inventory. The Inventory is clearly shown in the Big Book and this guide is to help you complete that process.

You may not like, agree with, understand, or want to do some of this work. We do not care what you like, agree with, understand, or want to do. We care what you do! What you like, agree with, understand, or want to do is what brought you here.

This is the work you must do to stay sober. As the shoe company ad says — “Just do it!”